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TAGS: [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [IZ](#) [LG](#)
SUBJECT: LATVIAN PLANS IN IRAQ FOR 2008 AND BEYOND
(C-RE8-00009)

REF: STATE 2310

Classified By: Ambassador Catherine Todd Bailey. Reason: 1.4 (C)

11. (S) In response to reftel, post submits the following responses to the questions posed:

1A. (S) WHAT ARE EUROPEAN LEADERS' LONG-TERM (I.E., BEYOND 2008) PLANS FOR THEIR FORCES AND OTHER EFFORTS IN IRAQ?

(S) Latvian leaders believe that they have made their contribution to Iraq with their combat deployment from 2004 - 12007. They are willing to retain a very small number of troops in Iraq to assist with training and HQ operations, but are unlikely to return substantial combat forces absent a significant change in Iraq. Latvia will offer political support for continued efforts to stabilize, democratize and rebuild Iraq, but economic assistance is unlikely to be forthcoming.

1B. (S) WHICH, IF ANY, EUROPEAN PARTNERS PLAN ON HAVING FORCES IN IRAQ DURING 2008 AND BEYOND?

1C. (S) WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTIVE FORCE SIZES, AND WHAT ROLE DO THEY PLAN TO PLAY IN-COUNTRY, TO INCLUDE COMBAT OPERATIONS, BASE PROTECTION, TRAINING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

(S) (Response to B and C jointly) Latvia can be expected to continue to have a few (3 - 5) soldiers in Iraq through 2008, and likely beyond, if appropriate training and HQ billets are available.

1D. (S) WHAT NON-MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS, SUCH AS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, DO THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PLAN TO UNDERTAKE IN 2008 AND BEYOND?

(S) Latvia is unlikely to make economic contributions to Iraq. It is just starting to become a donor nation and its priorities are Afghanistan and FSU states such as Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine.

1E. (S) PLEASE PROVIDE ANY INSIGHT INTO WHICH COUNTRIES MIGHT BE RESPONSIVE TO INCENTIVES FROM THE U.S. WHAT FORMS MIGHT THESE INCENTIVES TAKE?

(S) The size and current op tempo of the Latvian military mean that a significant increase in military forces is virtually impossible, no matter what incentives might be offered.

1F. (S) WHAT ARE THE LEGAL AUTHORITIES THAT THESE COUNTRIES

NEED IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN IRAQ?

(S) Latvian troops in Iraq operate under a parliamentary mandate. It was most recently extended in December 2007 to December 31, 2008. In recent years, the mandate extension has not faced significant political challenges, which can be expected to continue if the situation in Iraq does not significantly deteriorate. While a UNSC mandate is not a requirement for the deployment of Latvian troops, having one is helpful in addressing the concerns of members of parliament and securing their support.

1G. (S) HOW MIGHT DOMESTIC ELECTIONS HELD BY SOME OF THE EUROPEAN PARTNERS IN 2008 AFFECT THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS IN IRAQ?

(S) No elections are scheduled in Latvia in 2008. The next elections will be in June 2009 for local governments and the European Parliament.

1H. (S) ARE ANY EUROPEAN COUNTRIES LOOKING FOR WAYS TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED ON IRAQ? IF SO, WHAT WAYS ARE THEY CONSIDERING AND WHY? IF NOT, WHY?

(S) As noted above, Latvian leaders feel that they have done their part already.

1I. (S) WHAT DO EUROPEAN LEADERS VIEW AS THEIR INTERESTS AT STAKE IN IRAQ?

(S) Latvia views Iraq almost exclusively through the prism of relations with the U.S. They view helping us in Iraq as the way to ensure that we will be there to help them when they need assistance in future. Some political leaders have a broad idea of expanding democracy, but even those who view

Iraq through that lens would say that the only reason for Latvia to help out in Iraq is to support the United States.

1J. (S) WHAT INVESTMENT OR CONTRACT OPPORTUNITIES ARE EUROPEAN LEADERS LOOKING FOR IN IRAQ?

(S) Difficult supply routes and lack of local knowledge do not make Iraq a place that Latvian leaders think of for expansion of economic activities.

1K. (S) WHAT DO EUROPEAN LEADERS VIEW AS CONSTRAINTS TO THEIR GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ?

(S) Politically - the deep unpopularity of the Iraq mission among the Latvian public and the perception that this is not important to Latvian interests. Practically - the strain on Latvian forces in deploying there (especially in providing logistical support); limited budget resources; and unhappy memories of their time working under Polish command in Iraq.

1L. (S) HOW DO THE EUROPEANS VIEW THE SECURITY SITUATION IN IRAQ? DO THEY BELIEVE IT IS GETTING BETTER, WORSE, OR STAYING THE SAME? IF BETTER, HOW LONG DO THEY BELIEVE THE IMPROVED SITUATION WILL LAST?

(S) Latvian officials we have spoken to seem generally to believe that the situation has improved but they are skeptical that this can hold for very long.

1M. (S) HOW MIGHT EUROPEAN THREAT ASSESSMENT AFFECT CALCULATIONS ABOUT GREATER ENGAGEMENT?

(S) This is likely to be quite far down the list of Latvia's thinking. Practical concerns like lack of money and lack of troops willing to serve there are much more important.

1N. (S) DO THE CURRENT EUROPEAN PARTNERS VIEW A BETTER SECURITY SITUATION AS A REASON TO PULL OUT OF IRAQ?

(S) In the case of the Latvian withdrawal of combat forces in 2007, they specifically pointed to the improved situation in their AOR as well as the return of local government control as reasons it was time for them to go.

10. (S) PLEASE PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE LEVELS OF ECONOMIC/HUMANITARIAN AID FROM EUROPEAN CAPITALS TO IRAQ? WILL IT BE INCREASING, DECREASING, OR STAYING CONSTANT?

(S) We expect Latvian contributions to stay constant at zero or perhaps a few small (less than USD 10,000) ones in coming years, mainly due to the need to focus limited resources elsewhere.

11P. (S) WHAT UPCOMING EUROPEAN MEETINGS INDICATE POSSIBLE INCREASED INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ?

(U) No information available.

11Q. (S) WHAT ARE EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT REACTIONS TO CURRENT PUBLIC SENTIMENTS REGARDING IRAQ?

(S) Latvian officials downplay that there are any Latvian troops in Iraq at all, knowing that public opinion polls have consistently shown 80% of the Latvian public oppose the deployment.

11R. (S) ARE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES LOOKING FOR A COHESIVE EUROPEAN IRAQ POLICY OR IS IRAQ A BILATERAL ISSUE SUBJECT TO INTERNAL PRIORITIES?

(S) Latvia views Iraq primarily through the bilateral lens, but it keeps an eye on the European perspective. Even while working closely with us, they will not take any action that would isolate them or place them in a very, very small group within the EU or NATO on Iraq.
BAILEY